

# Alden Root and Branch: Daniel Hudson Burnham

*John and Priscilla Alden had ten children—eight of whom had heirs. Their descendants have helped to build America for fourteen generations—and counting. First in an occasional series.*

One who personally changed the face of American cities was the father of the skyscraper—Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912)—who traced his lineage back to two of the Alden children, Elizabeth and Ruth. Burnham was born in Henderson, New York on Sept. 4, 1846. He joined architect John Wellborn Root in 1873 to establish one of the most famous architectural firms in U.S. history, Burnham & Root. Burnham & Root's development of the structural innovation of the skyscraper included the four-story Reliance Building in Chicago (1890; increased to 13 stories in 1895) with terracotta facing material that provided the model for the steel-and-glass skyscrapers of the 1890s.



Alden descendent Daniel Hudson Burnham was one of the most famous architects in U.S. history.



Burnham & Root was selected to coordinate the construction of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893), but Root died suddenly in 1891, and Charles Follen McKim of McKim, Mead & White (which designed Plymouth Rock's canopy) took his place. In 1891 Burnham established the firm of D. H. Burnham, which became D. H. Burnham & Co. in 1896. He was elected president of the American Institute of Architects in 1894. After his World's Fair success, Burnham undertook many other significant architectural projects including New York's dramatic Flatiron Building and Washington, D.C.'s Union Station.

Burnham's vision, embodying the defining twentieth-century American sentiment of "think big," is evident in his famous quote:

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die, but long after we are gone be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistence."